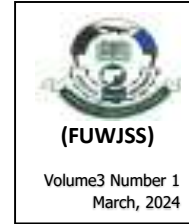


MONETIZATION OF PARTY PRIMARY ELECTIONS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper investigates the monetization of party primary elections and its social implications in north-central Nigeria. The study used quantitative instrument of data collection and analyses were conducted using frequency counts and simple percentages. Questionnaires were distributed to four hundred (400) respondents. The investment theory of party competition forms the theoretical framework of analyses in the study. The study's results revealed that monetization of party primary elections result to bad governance, invites injustice and deprive citizens' franchise. The study concludes that monetization of party primary elections in north-central Nigeria denies the measuring of the credibility and competency of aspirants; thus, leaving the winning of elections to the highest bidders. In this pattern of electioneering, transparency is out of place, democracy is buried, and the right candidates for political positions are rejected. The study recommends that there should be the abolishment of delegates or indirect party primaries and this should be replaced with direct primaries.

Keywords: Delegates voting, Direct primaries, Democracy, Monetized election, Party primaries.

Introduction

The sustainability of fairness and transparency in selection of leaders at all levels is said to be through democracy. In other words, democracy is set to be the only medium through which electorates choose their leaders, democratic government pave way for the masses to choose their representative to the parliament to which their overall interests are represented and this is first through direct primaries, or, party primaries, and subsequently the secondly election, otherwise referred to as the general elections. Democracy is contended to be government of the people by the people and for the people (Auwal & Isa, 2020), and to be the best form of government all over the world (P.197). The credibility of politics is an index for sustainable development in a situation where democracy is abolished for whatever reason turns to jeopardize the right of the masses. In sum, democracy in a way defines the will of the general masses hence leaders are being selected by counting majority votes in any given election. It is a situation where the masses participate and benefit government through their representatives; as an elected leader he/she has certain obligations he/she is expected to fulfill, by standard practice there is usually direct election to select credible candidates for primaries and secondary or, general elections respectively, otherwise there is no election and consequently there is no democracy. Nnoli, (2006) contended that there is no democracy without election, quite unfortunately in most of the Africa countries democracy has decay, it is pluralized, monetized and the influence of ethnicity among others are the core variables that have truncated it, democracy is abolished. This may be because a ruling party is dominant as in Tanzania, because voting is heavily influenced by ethnicity as in Kenya, or because parties have clear regional strongholds that render certain seats “safe” as in Ghana (Susan, Seidu, Gretchen & Gbensuglo, 2021).

Monetization of elections entails when aspirants use money to buy votes from electorates, it is a situation where credibility and competency of the aspirants is not measured, and here the highest bidder is a criterion for winning elections. In this pattern of electioneering, transparency is out of place, democracy is buried, and the right candidates for the jobs are heavily neglected. “Elections appear to be more monetized now than ever in most African elections giving credence to a constitutional office not because of one’s intellectual capacity and leadership qualities but because one is able to bribe voters, playing down leadership to be equated to one’s ability to give material things” (Kenneth, 2021). Monetization of elections is sometimes referred to as money politics. This money politics determines the outcome of election; it is the latter of the abolishment of democracy. Money politics is simply the use of money as incentive or instrument use

by politicians and political parties to influence the outcome of political contest (Ojo, 2006). The roles of money in politics actually derives from the challenges posed by poor leadership recruitment.

Monetization of elections in Nigeria dates back to the 1922 Clifford constitution which brought an elective principle that enabled only four elective seats (three for Lagos and one for Calabar). This was an income-based franchise (Jinadu, 2010). The provision of the elective principle was based purely on financial qualification. It only allowed those with annual incomes of £100 or more to participate in election. This was happening at a time when the annual salary of most Nigerians was less than £100, this view is that of Tamuno (1966). The monetization perpetuated the Nigeria we see today. People with credibility, good leadership qualities, and competence do not get access to secure political offices to offer what they have for the nation due to lack of money to give electorates. For instance, in the 2022 primaries where delegates primary elections were conducted or the indirect primaries is nothing in collaboration with democracy, few people choose among many aspirants and present the highest bidder to the masses to vote for each political party. In this situation the electorates have no choice rather than to vote for the few people presented to them by party delegates. This is unhealthy for democracy and thus far from election fairness and transparency and consequently bad governance in place. Emmanuel & Uche (2018) contended that monetization of election has had a very negative effect on political leadership in the country. Most people who would genuinely want to perform in office often cannot get into office because they lack resources needed for the ritual of money politics. Of course, nearly everything in Nigeria is commoditized depending on the prize one could pay, ranging from election, sex for marks and sex for grades in tertiary institutions, sexual relationship, religious or worship centers among others. It has been established that in Nigerian tertiary institutions in most cases, female students out of desperation do propose sexual intimacy to their lecturers in lieu for academic rewards (Mohammed, Temitope, Oluwasola, & Kingsley 2020). Similarly, religion is commoditized and commercialized into money making ventures (Idyorough, 2015). This paper is thus an attempt to examine monetization of party primary elections and its societal implications: An assessment of central Nigeria.

Ordinary, voting which is a medium for selection of leaders democratically is determined by the majority of the population, credibility, competence and track records of the aspirant across all political parties should be a criterion for voting, popular participation of the electorates base franchise as captured in the 1999 constitution 5(117) of Nigeria, it is the fundamental rights that citizens 18 years and above are eligible to vote and

be voted for, the practice of election in Nigeria is the opposite, people without money cannot contest, for instance the 2023 election which the primaries were conducted between May and June 2022 the presidential form was a hundred million naira (100,000,000), while that of gubernatorial was 50 million naira (50,000,000). This is a way of depriving poor majority with competence and credibility from contesting. The Nigerian political system has been monetized and this monetization has trampled upon the principles of professionalism in the country. Today, everybody in Nigeria irrespective of level of education, discipline/profession status, etc is a politician and can assume any political position provided he/she has the financial wherewithal to contest elections by affording the institutional high cost of party form, campaign cost, party-agents fees, Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) fees, voters' inducement, party tugs, security agents, and of course legal fees (Echem, 2021).

In the past so many attempts were put in place to combat monetization of politics in Nigeria through agitations by freedom fighters and groups to enable democracy take proper shape for instance Woldehenna, Atuyambe, Peter, Clerisme, Murphy, Ringheim, & Tonya (2005) contended that faith-based organizations played vital roles in attaining true democracy. Many faith-based organizations later turned political because they felt politics was the best medium to address some of the issues and problems confronting them. After the independence Muslim communities, (FBOs) such as Jama'atu Nasril Islam were established; Jama'atulZalatulBid'ahWa'ikamatissunna and Muslim Women Association of Nigeria were established. These organizations train and send missionaries all over Nigeria. Again, they also have the Red Cross as a way of responding to social services, serves in mosques, festivals and on local hajji (Ibrahim, Wakili, & Muazzam, 2006). Similarly, faith-based organizations (FBOs) like Christians among the Protestants, and Catholics were not convinced with the Islamic thus forming Christian associations and looked into social, economic and political issues of the country (Nasiru, & Ali, 2019). Despite all these efforts the problem of monetizing election has persisted as the situation with the 2022 primaries. This has adverse effects on Nigerians ranging from deprivation to franchise to choose credible candidates that will represents the overall interest of the general masses, lack of accountability and transparency, and perpetuation of corruption, again this has damaged the reputation of politics as profession among others.

Every profession in the world has people best fit to operate within its confines. Medical profession for instance is occupied by medical doctors and Nurses who are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that the sick

get better. So, the effectiveness and efficiency of the medical profession is measured through the competence of trained medical doctors or professionals. Similarly, the Law profession is occupied by Lawyers whose professionalism is demonstrated in courts and legal matters. Also, we have Engineers who are knowledgeable in the field of engineering. For instance, if a newly constructed building collapses they will be held responsible, in the situation of leadership in Nigeria is neither about professionalism nor competency rather it is the highest bidder (P.1033). So many studies have been conducted about monetization of election and vote buying in Nigeria for instance Emmanuel & Uche (2018) investigated into monetization of electoral politics and the challenge of political exclusion in Nigeria their paper discovered that money has become the deciding factor in Nigerian politics, money is the general crisis of democracy and governance in Nigeria, exclusion of non-elites into political participation and increased systemic corruption as the effects of monetization of election in Nigeria. Similarly, Ugonma, & Ugbor (2020) conducted their study on electoral value chain and the youth political participation in 2019 general election in Nigeria, their study concluded that monetization of electoral value chain excludes productive youths into politics because they lack financial strength, this deprives them of contributing their quota to the nation and consequently perpetuated insecurity in the Country. Of course, not much empirical work has been done on the implication for monetization of party primary elections in Nigeria, to this effect, this paper is set to examine monetization of party primary elections, and its societal implications with specific focus to central Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on investment theory of party competition. The theory is a political theory and is generally informed by the elite's paradigm of leadership patterns in democratic settings. The theory was developed by Thomas Ferguson (1983). The main postulation of the theory is the logic of money-driven political system (Thomas, 1995). The theory describes how money is the driven tool by political parties as it relates to contest and winning of election, in this explanation, it is not the competence of the political aspirants, rather the structure of the political party, aspirant who do not have potentials and competency to win elections are sponsored by their political parties and consequently this becomes an investment for the party, they put in much resources to ensure their candidates win their opponents. This is where *god-fatherism* has come into play in the democracy of today, political parties and political god-fathers invest huge money into their candidates as a competition against the opposition party, this is done through sponsoring candidates to purchase of electoral forms,

campaigns, votes buying from electorates, and during post-election taken winners to appeal courts.

Investment theory of party competition brings to the fore the dynamics and implications of money driven politics on social and economic development in a country (Echem, & Amadi, 2021). In this regards, political investors exist in political parties and aspirants seeks for political investors that invest huge materials to their election, when they get to the office the priority is not the masses rather to pay back the government's money to their investors. Investment theory of party competition is not just relevant to this study but applicable because in the situation of Nigerian primaries of 2022 ahead of 2023 elections, it was typically a game of the highest bidder, this is because there were no direct primaries rather political delegates voted and it was monetized. Investors invested money in dollars to in candidates and it was given to the political delegates. Competence, integrity and accountability are not criterion to win (P, 13.)

Research Methodology

Survey method was adopted in this study. Accidental sampling procedure was used to draw a sample of one hundred (400) respondents from the unknown population of people Eighteen years and above in some selected states in North-Central Nigeria namely Benue, Federal capital territory (FCT) Kogi, and Nasarawa state respectively. Respondents were selected from the main routes and pulling units in each of these States. On each of these routes, the researchers stood by the roadside and administered questionnaires to any Nigerian that fall into voting age category. This was done in each state until the number of respondents designed to cover it were exhausted. In each of these study areas the researchers had research assistance who understood the spoken language to aid non-literates in filling the questions. Questionnaires were structured in both open and close ended questions eliciting information about the patterns of monetizing election primaries in Nigeria, the societal implication for the monetized election primaries in Nigeria, and what measures can be put in place to abolish monetization of election primaries in Nigeria. Data were analyzed in relation to the research objectives with the use of frequency counts and simple percentages tables, while research findings were presented in semantic details or narrative form.

TABLE 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age

In table 1 below, we present data on the age distribution of respondents

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-35	105	26.2%

36-45	82	20.5%
46-55	79	19.7%
56-65	68	17.0%
66 and above	66	16.5%
Total	400	100%

The table above revealed that a significant number of respondents (26.2%) were within the ages of 18-35; while 20.5% were from the age interval 36-45, in the same vein 19.7% were between age 46-55, 17% of the respondents were found between age 56-65, and 16.5% of the respondents fall under ages of 66 years and above. This is an indication that the study was dominated by the youths who are the drivers and heart of every society and should have knowledge of how election primaries were conducted in Nigeria.

TABLE 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	206	51.5%
Female	194	48.5%
Total	400	100%

The table above is a presentation of respondents' base on the sex status; the data revealed that majority of the respondents (51.5%) were males while 48.5% females. This accidental sample accessed male than females by implication.

TABLE 3: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming	86	21.5 %
Trading	101	25.2%
Civil Service	88	22.0%
Unemployed/ Underemployed	99	24.7%
Others	26	6.5%
Total	400	100%

Table 3 above revealed that a significant number of respondents (25.2%) across the Study areas were traders, as such were easily selected while 24.7% of the respondents were either unemployed or underemployed. Again, 22.0% of the respondents were civil servants, similarly 21.5% of the

respondents were farmers of different kind, in the same vein 6.5% of the sampled respondents fall into the category of others (It could be students, members of the NYSC, politicians, among others)

TABLE 4; Distribution of Respondents by level of education

Respondents' level of education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	60	15.0%
Secondly	104	26.0%
Tertiary	205	51.2%
Others	31	7.7%
Total	400	100%

The data presented in the table above is the level of education of the respondents and it was found that majority of the respondents (51.2%) were holders of Ordinary National Diploma (OND), National Certificate in Education (NCE), Higher National Diploma (HND), Bachelors of science and Arts (B.sc and B.A) degrees, Masters of Science and Arts, and Doctors of philosophy (MSc and PhDs) In different fields, 26% had Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) while 15% were holders of First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). While 7.7% of the sampled respondents were did not acquire formal education.

TABLE 5: The quest to know if the respondents were aware of the monetization of election primaries in Nigeria.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	400	100%
NO	00	00%
Total	400	100%

The table above presents a data on the quest to understand if the sampled respondents were aware of the monetization of election primaries in Nigeria, all the sampled respondents (100%) accepted they were aware.

TABLE 6: Response on patterns of monetizing party primary election in Nigeria

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Disbursement of cash to party delegates	248	62.0%
Disbursement of cash to party representatives counting votes	74	18.5%

Bribe to Courts of appeal for cancellation of election in one's favour	78	19.5%
Total	400	100%

The data above is a presentation of responses on patterns of monetizing election primaries in Nigeria; the data revealed that majority of the sampled respondents (62%) submitted that politicians disburse money to their party delegates to vote for them, thus it is no longer about who is suitable for the position rather the highest bidder. Again, 19.5% of the respondents averred that politicians seeking for political positions gives money as bribe to court of appeal to cancel any election that is not in their favour inform of redress, in this regard too, it implies that the highest bidder wins the race by implication. While 18.5% of the sampled respondents opined that the politicians bribe the officials of the party responsible for votes counting to manipulate elections in their own favour, in this situation too, the highest bidder wins the race.

TABLE 7: Societal implications for the monetized party primaries election in Nigeria

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bad Governance	117	29.2%
Deprivation of franchise of the citizenry	89	22.2%
Sustain underdevelopment	104	26.0 %
Lack of social justice	90	22.5%
Total	400	100%

The above table presents data collected for societal implications of the monetized party primary election in Nigeria. A significant number of the respondents (29.2%) agreed that monetization of party primary election in Nigeria is a reason for bad governance, this is because the leaders assumed office through corruption as such it is corruption that sustain their office, while 26.0% of the respondents submitted that it sustains underdevelopment in the Country, in the same vain 22.5% of the respondents opined that monetization of party primary election results to lack of social justice, 22.2% of the respondents said it is a way of depriving citizens of franchise.

TABLE 8: To suggest what measures can be put in place to abolish monetization of party primary election in Nigeria.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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Prosecution of anyone found monetizing elections	198	49.5%
Abolishment of indirect party primaries to replace direct primaries.	173	43.2%
Civil campaigns be made to educate electorates on the implications of vote buying on the society	29	7.2%
Total	400	100%

The table above is a presentation of data on measures that can be put in place to minimize monetization of party primary election in Nigeria. Majority of the respondents (49.5%) opined that anyone found in the act of vote buying/selling should be prosecuted by the laws this will serve as deterrence to politicians who are willing to perform very poor thereby looting public funds to buy votes and to those delegates that vote because of money instead of credibility. While 43.2% of the respondents were of the view that the indirect primary election is not healthy in democratic setting thus be replaced by direct primaries, in the same vein 7.2% of the respondents suggested that electorates sales their votes probably because some do not know the societal implications associated with it as such civil campaign be organized prior to election to sensitize the masses on the implications associated to vote buying and selling.

The major objective of this study was to investigate into societal implications of monetization of election party primaries in North-central Nigeria. Empirical data revealed that majority of the sampled respondents (26.2%) were between the ages of 18-35 years, findings of the respondents on educational level has it that majority of the respondents (51.2%) attended tertiary institutions. Data on patterns of monetizing party election primaries in Nigeria, revealed that majority of the respondents (62%) said politicians seeking positions distributes money to party delegates to vote for them, this shows how desperate they are to attain certain political positions, thus in this situation the party delegates are carried away with money given to them thereby not voting right aspirants rather aspirants with the highest bidder, it is not how credible one is, the person's vision and mission for the party and the nation is not a criterion rather his/her pocket determines his/her faith to become the party's flag bearer. Also, this finding revealed aside the money given to party delegates out of desperation, aspirants and their election sponsors gives money to the party's representatives responsible for counting of votes to manipulates the votes in their favour, it is all about money, the counting of votes thus lost its fairness to the highest

bidder. Furthermore, findings show that, the continuity of evil and corrupts minds of these aspirants go extra miles by going to courts of appeal when the elections primary is not in their favour, they present the case inform of redress knowing very well that he/she is not qualified, he/she now put in much money to the court so that the case will be ruled in their favour, in most situations the court do so, this shows how corrupts the Nigerian judicial system is.

Field work on societal implications for the monetized party primaries election in Nigeria, majority of the respondents (29.2%) said it is results to bad governance, this is because the person or people used corruption to assume offices as such it is the same corruption that sustains their tenure in office, during voting , the political parties and political investors invest hugely into the election of their candidates to ensure they win as such while in office it is a payback time, the masses are abandoned, projects are not executed, the public funds are embezzled for personal and party benefits not the masses whose common wealth belongs to, . It is with this that education and health sectors are nothing to write home about, electricity power supply is very poor, roads are poorly constructed and very bad for usage, monies for security are not properly channeled thus perpetuating insecurity in the country. This finding has commonalities with the work of Emmanuel & Uche (2018) on Monetization of electoral politics and the challenge of political exclusion in Nigeria, that monetization of election is the major crises of governance and democracy in Nigeria. Again, finding revealed that monetization of party primary election in a way deprives people without money franchise because they are not allowed to be voted for which is the constitutional right of every Nigerian 18 years and above, this kills credibility and transparency of elections. This finding confirms the position of Auwal & Isa (2015) on vote buying and strategic use of money in the 2015 general elections in Taraba State that vote buying denies a society the democratic basic idea of transparency and accountability.

Findings further contended that monetization of party primary election is one of the causes of underdevelopment in Nigeria; underdevelopment is a direct consequence of impoverishment, as such, using money to buy votes later results to looting the economy of the entire masses thus benefited by few individuals thereby killing all developmental policies of the nation. However, findings revealed that monetization of party primary election kills social justice, this is because the election becomes a thing of the highest bidder, the aspirants who has good policies, most competent by educational qualification, among others is not granted the opportunity to serve, thus social justice has no place in Nigerian politics.

Findings of the field on work on what measures can be put in place to abolish monetization of party primary election in Nigeria. Majority of the

respondents (49.5%) said it will be a welcome development if anyone found in monetizing election, the person should be arrested and prosecuted, this is a fraudulent act as such it is the responsibility of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to arrest both the buyers and sellers of vote and to this end, it will be a deterrence to all Nigerians willing to do same in the nearest future, while others submitted that party primaries is not a thing of party structure, it is a concern of the masses because this is a way of selecting their leaders as such indirect primaries (primaries done by party delegates) should be abolished and replaced by direct primaries where electorates select their candidates, party primaries be voted by electorates and not delegates whose credibility is often compromised as this is the only way to attain true democracy. further suggested that civil campaigns be done prior to election to educate the masses on the societal implications of vote buying/selling this is because some electorates are ignorant of this social vices. This finding confirms that of Omodia (2011) on Political parties and the challenges of free and fair elections in Nigeria: A focus on Kogi state 2011 gubernatorial election, that mobilization and political education it is important as it will be a medium for transformation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Base on the above findings, we concluded that monetization of party primary election is not healthy for the county Nigeria, it has perpetuated bad governance, sustain underdevelopment in the county through impoverishment, it put in place gross social injustice, and has deprived many citizens the rights to be voted for political positions. In the aspect of measures to put in place to minimize vote buying/selling the study concludes on arresting and prosecution of anyone involved in such act, abolishment of indirect party primaries and ensuring civil campaigns to enlighten the masses of the implications of monetization of elections. The paper recommends that the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) should stand to her responsibility to ensure monetization of election are stopped in Nigeria not just party primary elections, in other to achieve this, both the electorates and aspirants should be monitored thoroughly, anyone found in such act such be given punishment commensurable to the crime committed. Indirect party primaries election or election of party delegates is a not a product of democracy as such it is the duty and responsibility of the Independent National electoral commission (INEC) to conduct all elections including primaries, thus it is imperative to replace indirect primaries by direct primaries (election by the masses). Introduction of electronic voting is very important, this will serve the overall interest of what transparency is, manipulation of any kind will

become difficult and free and fair election will take place. It was discovered that vote selling is a product of ignorance as such, civil groups should do justice to civil campaign, to see how best the masses can be given light concerning selling their future and that of their children for peanuts. Future researchers should consider investigating into monetization of general elections, future implications and possible solutions in Nigeria.

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